

SUMMER 1933

CINEMA

QUARTERLY

IN THIS NUMBER

JOHN GRIERSON

F. A. HOARE

ERIC M. KNIGHT

R. S. LAMBERT

STUART LEGG

HERBERT READ

LEONTINE SAGAN

VICTOR SAVILLE

G. W. PABST

in an interview

BASIE WRIGHT

Etc. Etc.

REVIEWS STILLS

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Edited by NORMAN WILSON

Review Editor: FORSYTH HARDY

London Correspondent: BASIL WRIGHT

Volume 1

Number 4

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

SUMMER 1933

THE SPECTATOR

WITH the present issue we complete our first volume. Whether or not we have achieved a position of significance in cinema criticism, we have at least tried to avoid the extremes of adulation and prejudice, to be constructive and practical rather than vaguely theoretical. We do not, however, wish to make the occasion an opportunity for sentimentalising over our achievement. It is past and must stand. We go forward into the future with renewed vigour, plans for development, and a stronger belief than ever in the possibilities of the film as a medium of expression.

There are still being produced as many indifferent and pernicious films, but at the same time the number of intelligent films, coming even from America, is gradually on the increase. Documentaries and what are known generally as non-theatrical films, made as historical records, for propaganda or for education in the widest sense, are becoming steadily more numerous and have contributed largely to the finer achievement of contemporary cinema. Concurrently with the advance in production, and even ahead of it, has been the growth of a new and more intelligent cinema audience, created to some extent by the growing number of film societies throughout the country. Miss Cohen's repertory policy at the London Academy continues successfully. Yet it is still the only repertory cinema in this country. How long will it be before there is one in every important town?

The creation of better films and the creation of better audiences to justify them. These are the objects for which we must strive.

What are our plans?

With the commencement of our new volume in the autumn there will appear what will be radically a new *Cinema Quarterly*.

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There will be no reduction in the present standard of *Cinema Quarterly*. On the contrary. The present features will be strengthened and extended, and the already considerable list of authoritative contributors will be added to with each number.

FILM REVIEWS.

Under the editorship of Forsyth Hardy, the Films of the Quarter will be reviewed even more selectively than formerly. The major films in future will receive somewhat fuller consideration, while a larger number of lesser films will be noticed on whatever points of special interest they may have.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

Our service of foreign correspondence will be considerably extended and will include letters from most of the important producing countries, as well as notes on the influence of the cinema elsewhere.

THE FILM SOCIETIES.

As formerly, it will be our policy to support and assist the development of the film societies movement. Every help will be given to readers wishing to form a society in their own district.

SUB-STANDARD PRODUCTION.

An important new feature will deal with the development of sub-standard production, particularly for those interested in documentary, experimental, propaganda or educational work. There can be little doubt that the future of independent production depends largely on the development of the 16mm. field, and we expect to make some important announcements regarding this matter, in both this country and America, in our next issue.

On our part we shall do everything possible to make the new *Cinema Quarterly* a complete periodical for both the thoughtful spectator and the intelligent film-maker.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE POET AND THE FILM

HERBERT READ

EVERY work of art is a product of the creative imagination, and to be worthy of the name of art, the film, too, must be a product of the creative imagination.

Before such a sentence can mean much, however, we must define that vague phrase, "the creative imagination." I don't particularly like to use the word "creative" in this connection. It imputes to the artist a god-like rôle and that is bad for his conceit. There is nothing new under the sun, and all the greatest artist can do is to discover new arrangements of existing elements. That is not really to be creative: it is re-creative, amusing, illuminative, instructive, affecting. But my excuse for using the word "creative" in conjunction with "imagination" is to imply something more than a merely mental activity. Not merely imagination, but imagination *embodied*. Imagination finding its objective equivalents in sight and sound and touch. Imagination translated into sensible shapes, tones and textures.

But imagination itself is a vague word. What do we mean by it? The meaning of imagination has been discussed for well over two thousand years. It is discussed very acutely by Aristotle, and from Aristotle the discussion passes to the great tradition of mediaeval scholasticism; and from that tradition it passed into the school of romantic criticism, notably, in this country, to Coleridge; and we are still discussing the meaning of imagination. Meanwhile, in the seventeenth century a school of philosophy arose, led by Descartes, which denied the existence of imagination, or regarded it as so inferior to reason that it could and should be ignored. That school of philosophy held the field between the decline of scholasticism and the rise of romanticism and this is sometimes called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment: it is not an age distinguished for its works of art. Imagination, we may conclude, is essential to art, though it may be opposed to reason. A rational work of art—that sounds like a contradiction in terms and I think is a contradiction in terms:

it is a contradiction involved in the aims and methods of many modern film producers.

The centuries-long discussion of imagination to which I have referred succeeded in making a distinction between *ingenium* and *fantasia*: between fancy and imagination. This distinction was not always kept clear, because with that depressing desire to reduce all things to a unity which distinguishes philosophers, there has always been a tendency to reduce *ingenium* and *fantasia* to one faculty and call it the imagination. It has necessarily been a vain ambition, for actually two very distinct processes are involved.

Ingenium may be defined as the capacity to perceive or discover similitudes between otherwise disparate objects. We say that a person is as cool as a cucumber, by which we mean that we perceive this common element of coolness in two such disparate objects as such a person and a cucumber. Or describing the action of a man who is holding stocks in a rising market, we say that he is freezing on to a good thing, as water freezes to cold metal. These are elementary examples of simile and metaphor, but the whole art of poetry originates in such an activity. When the choice of terms in such comparisons is arbitrary (as it is in the case of the cucumber, because other things are cool besides the cucumber) then the activity might be called fancy or fantasy, and it is what Coleridge called a mode of memory emancipated from the order of space and time; it is an activity of the will involving choice—a choice of objective and definite things which can be brought into some illuminating association.

But *ingenium*, fancy, wit or whatever we are to call it, does not exhaust the activities of the mind engaged in literary creation. There is another process which begins with a state of emotional tension and to this nucleus of feeling attracts the objects or events which objectify or express the feeling. Such objects or events are no longer arbitrary, but exact and necessary. Everything, as it were, must conform to the colour and force of the original emotion. The power of imagination, to quote Coleridge again, reveals itself in a balance and reconciliation of "a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession combined with enthusiasm and feeling profound and vehement."

I hope this distinction between Fancy and Imagination is clear, because now I think we can apply it with surprising results to the art of the film.

The film produces its effect by projected images. These images, projected on the screen, are associated immediately

with the images stored in the memory of the spectator, and from that association or collocation of images results the emotions of surprise, delight, pleasure, pride or sorrow, which we experience in the picture house.

From this dependence on the visual image, there has arisen the notion that the film can only succeed as an art by avoiding all abstractions, by confining itself rigorously to the concrete image. Salvador Dali, who has written the scenario for an ultra-modern film called *Babaouo*, writes in the following strain:—

"Contrary to the usual opinion, the cinema is infinitely poorer and more limited for the expression of real processes of thought than is literature, painting, sculpture or architecture. About the only form below it is music, whose spiritual value, as everyone knows, is almost nil. The cinema is linked fundamentally, by its very nature, to the sensorial, vulgar and anecdotic surface of phenomena, to abstraction, to rhythmical impressions, in a word, to harmony. And harmony, the sublime product of abstraction, is by definition at the other extreme to the concrete, and consequently, to poetry.

"The rapid and continuous succession of images on the screen, . . . hinders all attempts to achieve the concrete and annuls more often than not (thanks to the element memory) its intentional, affective, lyrical quality. The mechanism of memory, upon which these images act in a manner exceptionally direct, tends even in itself to the disorganisation to the concrete, towards idealisation.

"In waking life, the latent purpose and the fury of the concrete nearly always become submerged in forgetfulness, but they rise to the surface again in dreams. The poetry of the film demands more than any other kind of poetry a complete dream metamorphosis in concrete irrationality before it can attain a real degree of lyricism."

And on the basis of that idea you have in France the surrealist film—a film that is completely irrational in its content, a film that can only be compared with the dream, even with the nightmare, and which gains all its force and vividness by possessing the same characteristics as the dream. The foremost film of this kind is Jean Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète*—A Poet's Blood—with music by Georges Auric. It is a vital experiment in film construction and it is the work of a poet—not of a camera-man, a kinist, a filmist or whatever you want to call the creator of a film, but of a man who is first and foremost and all the time a poet.

The first episode of Cocteau's film is called "The wounded hand" or "the poet's scars," and this is a summary of the scene:—A young man is seen painting a face which is so life-like that the mouth trembles like a living mouth. In wiping it off the canvas, the mouth remains alive in his hand. How can he get rid of this mouth which groans: "air,

air," and which drinks water from the points of his fingers? The poet presses it over the lips of a statue which then awakens, comes to life, grows animated.

The second episode is called: "Have the walls ears?" and begins with a dialogue:—

The Statue: You think it simple enough to get rid of a wound, to close the mouth of a wound.

The poet: Open me.

The Statue: You have one resource left: enter the mirror and walk about there.

The poet: It isn't done, to walk into mirrors.

The Statue: I congratulate you. You have written that a man can walk into mirrors and yet you don't believe it.

The poet: I . . .

The Statue: Try, try again.

The poet dives into the mirror, swims away slowly and disappears as into the depth of a dark room. The interior of the mirror changes to the *Hôtel des Folies Dramatiques*. Looking through keyholes, the poet spies out the news of a world whose frontiers are the divisions of the various rooms. In the solitude of the corridor, he discovers at each door the secrets of different points of view. Here, shooting in Mexico; the victim faces the pointed guns and twice prepares to die; there, the mysteries of China: on the sky-blue ceiling the sea exhales opium fumes. Here is the school of theft or of meanness, reminiscent of the "Hard Times" of Dickens or of the big finger of the Countess of Ségur, née Rostopchine, forcing the poor little devil into theft by whip strokes. But there is theft and theft. In the burglar's school, the child escapes, rises to the ceiling, jeers at the old witch and shakes his bells; and here is Room 23 which is the hopeless meeting-place of hermaphrodites.

What else is there left for the poet to do but "grip the butt-end of the revolver firmly in his hand, raise the safety-catch, place the right index-finger on the trigger, place the barrel against his temple, and fire?" The poet himself can only die once. "Mirrors ought to think twice before throwing reflections!" Nevertheless they reflect the poet sickened of glory standing before the impassive statue and flouting it, menacing it, dashing against it, at the risk of turning himself also into a statue.

The third episode is the snowball battle. Before the poet's statue, in the city where great men and little scamps have arranged to meet, snowballs hurtle through the air, spot clothes, riddle the walls. Dargelo's snowball hits a pale child who dies of toothache hiccupping blood whilst the voice of

Jean Cocteau, that of the poet, announces in verse:—

A marble blow was one ball of snow
And one was a star in the heart,
Parting shots given at school
Blows which make you spit blood
Blows as hard as balls of snow
Which pierce the heart with swift beauty.

The fourth episode is called "the profanation of the host." Suddenly the windows in the city fly open, and change into opera boxes. In evening dress the audiences lackadaisically applaud a dead beauty. The poet gets his last chance. To beat his partner, the marble woman, he cheats, stealing the ace of hearts from the breast of a lost child. This trick does for him. The child's guardian appears, all black: he is changed into a supernatural being and, with a noise like a factory, devours his prey. The poet dead, his need satisfied, the woman becomes a statue—that is to say, an inhuman thing, with her black gloves, denounced by the snow upon which her feet leave no imprint. "This new Europa, this bull whose horns make a lyre, she has only to take it and raise it up before fixing herself in that mortal boredom of immortality. That is the end of all."

Now this kind of film fits exactly, I think, our definition of fancy—a mode of memory emancipated from space and time. I will not attempt to interpret it: that is a task for a psycho-analyst. Its appeal depends on its concreteness, its irrationality, its strange dream-like fertility of images. Admittedly, it is an extreme—just as lyric poetry is an extreme of expression. It rejects the logical: it seeks the lyrical appeal, the direct sensation of the concrete. The only commercial films which a surrealist like Dali can accept are apparently those of the Marx Brothers. But the elements which dominate a film like Cocteau's or *Animal Crackers* are elements present in most good films. We might call it the cucumber: the sudden projection of a concrete image to represent an abstract idea. The projection of two images to suggest a similitude: in *Turksib* the swirl of water followed by the flickering revolutions of cotton bobbins—a swift concrete effort to convey complex ideas of underlying processes of dynamic cause and effect. The danger that threatens this kind of film is the cliché: the repetition of the same image in film after film—how often have we seen a close-up of grass waving against the sky, to suggest the peace of nature, of the wheels and piston of a locomotive to suggest travel, speed

or power and so on. But that fault is due to a lack of the faculties which are so conspicuously absent from the film in general, the faculties which must come into the film to make it the great art which the potentialities of its technique suggest it may some day become—that is to say, the poetic faculty itself. To the absence of that faculty in the process of film production is due not only the poverty of film fantasy, but the almost total absence of the film of imagination.

The film of imagination—the film as a work of art ranking with great drama, great literature, and great painting, will not come until the poet enters the studio.

I know what is immediately advanced against that idea—the necessity of working in the strict terms of a new medium, exploiting a new technique: the camera is the film artist's muse: down with the literary film and so on.

About such a point of view I have only two things to say:—firstly, that in every art there is a good deal of cant spoken about technique. Most techniques can be learnt in a few days, at the most in a year or two. But no amount of technical efficiency will create a work of art in any medium if the creative or imaginative genius is lacking. Naturally the technique must appeal to the sensibility of the poet: he must love his medium and work in it with enthusiasm: but the vision necessary to create not merely the means, but the end—that is a gift of providence and we call that gift poetic genius.

Secondly, those people who deny that there can be any connection between the scenario and literature seem to me to have a wrong conception, not so much of the film as of literature. Literature they seem to regard as something polite and academic, in other words, as something god-forsaken and superannuated, compounded of correct grammar and high-sounding ciceronian phrases. Such a conception reveals the feebleness of their sensibility. If you ask me to give you the most distinctive quality of good writing, I would give it you in this one word: VISUAL. Reduce the art of writing to its fundamentals and you come to this single aim: to convey images by means of words. But to *convey images*. To make the mind see. To project on to that inner screen of the brain a moving picture of objects and events, events and objects moving towards a balance and reconciliation of a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. That is a definition of good literature—of the achievement of every good poet—from Homer and Shakespeare to James Joyce or Ernest Hemingway. It is also a definition of the ideal film.

THE E.M.B. FILM UNIT

JOHN GRIERSON

IN official records you will find the E.M.B. Film Unit tucked away in a long and imposing list of E.M.B. Departments and Sub-Departments, forty-five all told. The Film Unit is number forty-five. "Research and Development" interests account for the first twenty-four. There the major part of E.M.B. work is done. In one respect or another it helps to integrate or promote all the major researches across the world which affect the production or preservation or transport of the Empire's food supplies. Consideration of cinema is, properly, junior to the consideration of such matters as entymological, mycological and low temperature investigation.

So, through considerations of Tea, Rice, Sugar, Tobacco, Tung Oil and Forest Products, to "Marketing Economic Investigation and Intelligence": Marketings of home agricultural produce, regional sales drives, marketing enquiries in general, and market intelligence services for fish, fruit, dairy produce, dried and canned fruits in particular, world surveys of production and trade, retail surveys, accounts of wastage in imported fruit, experimental consignments, and I know not what all. Then "Publicity" banner-heading the departments of newspaper advertisement, posters, recipes, leaflets, lectures, broadcasts, exhibitions, shopping weeks and trade meetings.

After the trade meetings, cinema. I give you its place not in humility, but for proportion. It is a department among other departments, and part of a very much larger scheme of educational and propaganda services. Whatever its pretensions in purely cinematic terms, it is dedicated and devoted to the usual cold-blooded ends of Government.

Of the fifteen hundred tyros who have applied for jobs in the E.M.B. unit, fifteen hundred exactly have expressed their enthusiasm for cinema, for art, for self-expression and the other beautiful what-nots of a youthful or simply vague existence. Not one has considered this more practical relationship of commissions to be served, nor the fact that Treasury money, and opportunity to make any films

at all, are entirely conditioned by these commissions to be served. The point is important. In England, as in any other country, there is little or no money for free production. There is money for films which will make box-office profits, and there is money for films which will create propaganda results. These only. They are the strict limits within which cinema has had to develop and will continue to develop.

The principal point of interest about the E.M.B. Film Unit is that within such necessary propaganda limits, it has been permitted a unique measure of freedom. The dogs of the commercial world are harried and driven to quick box-office results. The dogs of the propaganda world are more wisely driven to good results, for half the virtue of propaganda is in the prestige it commands. Another point: the commercials are only interested in the first results of their films: that is to say, in the amount of money a film takes in a twelve-month. The long-range propagandists are not. Quick takings are a guarantee of immediate public interest and are therefore important, but the persistence of a film's effect over a period of years is more important still. To command, and cumulatively command, the mind of a generation is more important than by novelty or sensation to knock a Saturday night audience cold; and the "hang-over" effect of a film is everything. In this sense the propaganda road to cinema has certain advantages. It allows its directors time to develop; it waits with a certain patience on their experiments; it permits them time to perfect their work. So by all logic it should do, and so it has done at the E.M.B. If the E.M.B. is an exception in the degree of its patience and the extent of the freedom which it permits, it is because the E.M.B. is the only organisation outside Russia that understands and has imagination enough to practice the principles of long-range propaganda. It is not unconscious of the example of Russia.

These more imaginative interpretations of the methods of propaganda are entirely due to Sir Stephen Tallents, whose book on the Projection of England indicates only slimly the creative work he has done for the mobilisation of the arts in the national service. The points of contact of E.M.B. publicity, education and propaganda are so many and various that I doubt if even the War produced so widely ranged or so penetrating a system. And the fact that it works in a lower key and without drawing attention to itself in easy species of ballyhoo, is the measure

of its strength as a peacetime activity. The other does for a pinch, but only so.

Its principal effect in six years has been to change the connotation of the word "Empire." Our command of peoples becomes slowly a co-operative effort in the tilling of soil, the reaping of harvests and the organisation of a world economy. For the old flags of exploitation it substitutes the new flags of common labour; for the old frontiers of conquest it substitutes the new frontiers of research and world-wide organisation. Whatever one's politics, and however cynical one may be about the factors destructive of a world economy, this change of emphasis has an ultimate historical importance. History is determined by just such buildings of new sentiments, and modern contacts have become so far-reaching and complicated that we must learn, in just such a way, to make our building deliberate.

I give you this conception of the E.M.B. as a world force, without apology. I cannot speak for the various official intentions or, for that matter guarantee that they understand the implication of the E.M.B.'s growing proportions, but so it has existed in some of our minds, and with consequent direction in most of the things we did.

In cinema we got the very brief commission "to bring the Empire alive." We were instructed in effect, to use cinema, or alternatively to learn to use it, to bring alive the industries, the harvests, the researches, the productions, and forward-looking activities of all kinds; in short to bring the day-to-day activities of the Empire at work into the common imagination. The only conditions laid down were that we should have the good sense to explore a few preliminary avenues, work for a period experimentally, and remember the sensitive nerves of Treasury officials: Mr Hildred being the unhappy financial Atlas appointed to carry this new and incomprehensible infant on his shoulders. I cannot say we succeeded at first with this neurological aspect of our work. We were confused in Mr Hildred's mind (and possibly very rightly) with the people who take snapshots at the seaside; and he was not sure that our results should cost any more than the customary five for a shilling. Whitehall, we discovered, was longer by a bittock than the road to Damascus, and sky splitting an even more valuable art than cinema. But we did (and for two long years) explore our avenues.

Before the E.M.B. Unit was formed for continuous

production, Walter Creighton and I wandered about looking at things. I think we must have seen every propaganda film in existence between Moscow and Washington. We certainly prepared the first surveys of the propaganda and educational services of the principal Governments. We ran, too, a school of cinema where all the films we thought had a bearing on our problem were brought together and demonstrated in whole or part, for the instruction of Whitehall. *Berlin, The Covered Wagon, The Iron Horse*, the Russians; we had all the documentaries and epics worth a hang; though, in calculation of our audience, we had perforce to change a few endings and consider some of the close-ups among the less forceful arguments. In effect, we sold our idea of cinema sufficiently well to get cash in hand for our first experimental productions. Creighton plumped for fantasy and I for documentary: Creighton making *One Family* a seven reel theatrical with B.I.F., and I *Drifters* with New Era.

The choice of documentary was made partly on personal grounds, and partly on grounds of common financial sense. A Government department, cannot, like the commercial gamblers, take a rap: or at least its powers of resistance are keyed only to the very smallest raps. Alternatively, if the Civil Service or any other public service must have its illegitimate infants, it is best to see that they are small ones. And documentary is cheap; it is on all considerations of public accountancy, safe. If it fails for the theatres, it may, by manipulation, be accommodated non-theatrically in one of half a dozen ways. Moreover, by reason of its cheapness, it permits a maximum amount of production and a maximum amount of directorial training against the future, on a limited sum. It even permits the building of an entire production and distribution machine for the price of a single theatrical. These considerations are of some importance where new experiments in cinema are concerned. With one theatrical film you hit or miss; with a machine, if it is reasonably run, the preliminary results may not be immediately notable or important, but they tend to pile up. Piling up they create a freedom impossible on any other policy.

The fact that documentary is the genre most likely to bring method and imagination into such day-to-day subjects as we deal with is, of course, a final argument.

On these high conceptions we have operated ever since *Drifters*. The problem was not so much to repeat that relative success but to guarantee that, with time, we

should turn out good documentaries as a matter of certainty. It was a case of learning the job not on the basis of one director, one location and one film at a time, but on the basis of half a dozen directors with complementary talents, and a hundred and one subjects along the line. And because the job was new and because it was too humble (and still is) to appeal to studio directors, it was also a question of taking young people and giving them their heads.

This was three years ago. In the meantime, we have gathered together, and in a sense created, Wright, Elton, Legg and half a dozen others. Wright is now, I believe, the best lyrical documentary director in the country, Elton the best industrial, and Legg the best all-rounder. One or two others will presently be heard from.

Their record to date is not, of course, a huge one, and in the circumstances could not be. It comprises *Industrial Britain* (with Flaherty), *Lumber, O'er Hill and Dale*, *Country Comes to Town*, *Shadow on the Mountain*, *Upstream*, *Voice of the World*, and *The New Generation*, all of which will come presently into the theatres. Very shortly Wright will have added three films from the West Indies, Elton a five-reel account of aeroplane engines, and Legg two films on the working of the Post Office. Anstey, a junior, has done *Uncharted Waters*, a film of Labrador exploration, and has now begun a film on timber research. J. N. G. Davidson has made *Hen Woman*, our only story documentary. D. F. Taylor, another junior, has a film on the stocks (for the Travel Association) dealing with the changing landscape of Lancashire. Evelyn Spice works on a new series of films for schools, covering the English seasons and the economic areas of England. To these add two or three odd films for the Ministry of Agriculture, sundry experiments in abstract films by Rotha and Taylor, and non-theatrical makings or re-editings at the rate of about fifty a year. That is the production account, and it is fair enough for the period involved. Two years' apprenticeship, or even three, is a short time for the exploration of a new craft, and the maturing of new talent, and I doubt if we expected anything considerable or exciting in less than five.

What I think is important is that this is the only group of its kind outside Russia: that is to say, the only group devoted deliberately, continuously, and with hope, to the highest forms of documentary. And its policy is in this respect unique, that so long as the film's general aim is served no consideration of a mere popular appeal is allowed

to enter. The director, in other words, is free in his manner and method as no director outside the public service can hope to be. His only limits are the limits of his finance, the limits of his aesthetic conscience in dealing so exclusively with an art of persuasion, and the limits of his own ability. In the practical issue they may sometimes embarrass, but do not seem to prevent a reasonably good result.

THE FUTURE OF THE E.M.B.

AS a postscript to John Grierson's account of the work of the E.M.B. Film Unit, comes the publication of the report of the Imperial Committee on Economic Consultation and Co-operation, which contains the recommendation that the Empire Marketing Board should be disbanded. The E.M.B. is an intricate organisation with wide ramifications, and while it is outwith our sphere to question the recommendation in general, we cannot but deplore its possible consequences in so far as they would affect the Film Unit, the disappearance of which would be a serious blow not only to the interests it serves but to the cinema as a whole.

Apart from its work of "bringing the Empire alive," its documentary work for industry and science, its service to education, the value of which is cumulative and can be assessed properly only after the passage of some considerable time, perhaps the greatest achievement of the E.M.B. has been the training of a group of young directors, free from the trammels and inhibitions of commercialism. Working in a unity of spirit and effort their talents have nevertheless been allowed to develop along distinctively individual lines. It may be that one day the influence of the spirit that has been created at the E.M.B. will be found to have been its most valuable gift to cinema.

With the widening application of the cinema as a means of instruction and demonstration, and the gradual realisation of its value as an influence and means of propaganda for social and industrial purposes, it would be little short of a tragedy if this group of specialised workers—the only one of its kind outside Russia—should be dispersed. It is safe to say that the Government will find increasing use for the cinema in future, and whatever the fate of the Empire Marketing Board as such, it is to be hoped that every effort will be made to retain the services of the Film Unit, whose real work, after its initial period of experiment, only now should be commencing.

N. W.



Chaliapine as Don Quixote in G. W. Pabst's film. Sancho Panza is played by George Robey in the English, and by Dorville in the French version.



Further stills from "Don Quixote." The photography is by Nicolas Farkas and the décor by André Andrejew. Stills by Roger Forster.



G. W. PABST AND "DON QUIXOTE"

An Interview by LUDO PATRIS

THE work of Pabst leaves no one indifferent. In sixteen films he has sketched the outline of an "ethics" (the word is his own) of which some day perhaps he will be able to formulate the definite expression.

If his art, which has always been a defence of humanity, has a tendency to wander sometimes, one must not forget that films such as *L'Atlantide* and *Don Quixote*, to say nothing of *Westfront 1918*, and *Kameradschaft*, have contributed to the cause of a better and richer cinema. Pabst is at the same time a thinker, an aesthete, and a worker trying to penetrate more and more the secrets of the business to which he has devoted himself.

This anxious care of study, of constant perfecting, appears clearly in the explanations which Pabst was good enough to give me about his latest picture during a recent visit to Belgium.

"*Don Quixote*?"

"A beautiful subject. One head and shoulders above the little romantic and fantastic anecdotes that they might have imposed upon me. But we had great difficulties to overcome."

"May I ask you to specify them?"

"First of all, as concerns the scenario, the author was obliged to modify considerably the chronology of the facts. Thus the picture finishes with the destruction of the poor *hidalgo's* library, which in the novel is only the end of the first part. Even the physiognomy of the episodes have undergone transformation. Don Quixote is armed knight by a mountebank and not by an inn-keeper. The ephemeral reign of Sancho Panza in Barataria Island has been simplified to the extreme."

"The reasons for these changes?"

"Optics which belong to the cinema require a certain enlargement of synthesis and much order in the narration."

It is at this price that rhythm is acquired and that the public can participate in cinematic action. For before everything the public wants to understand."

"Personally I was surprised to notice in the dialogue of *Don Quixote* some slang, a flagrant contradiction of historical facts."

"That is a matter which Paul Morand, Alexandre Arnaux and I discussed thoroughly. Do you remember the Bavarian soldier in *Westfront 1918*? When the question of the French doubling came up we were obliged to conclude that it was impossible to translate the dialect which one heard in the German version. We had the same problem with *Don Quixote*. Obviously Sancho Panza must speak like a French west coast peasant. How could that be rendered in French unless with the aid of slang which, if not authentic, would at least have the merit of placing the man? Note that the others express themselves in a most correct and almost academic manner."

"Is it in the same spirit that you chose the styles of the costumes?"

"Yes, and this in a very large measure."

"You have therefore tried to transpose *Don Quixote* to a universal plan?"

"But, sir, the cinema only exists on that. The whole cinema."

Up to this moment Pabst had not quitted his phlegm. Behind his glasses his bright eyes reflected only his intelligence and smile—that amazing smile which shows all his teeth and which had not left him for a second since we shook hands and began to talk. I was before an intellectual man discussing his art without asperity, even with amusement. Now the mask fell. The look darkened, the features hardened, the corner of the lips drooped. The speech, sometimes hesitating and coloured with a slight accent, became short with guttural intonations. I had touched a sore point.

"Stories of olden days. Old time toilettes. The soul of the crowd has nothing to trouble about. The cinema is no game, sir. It is a master. A formidable vehicle of ideas of which they try to stop the march. And I affirm it with a full knowledge . . . *Pandora's Box* . . . *Crisis* . . . *The Diary of a Lost Girl* . . . have undergone all sorts of censoring. *Westfront 1918* because of its pacific character, was the object of the lowest kind of manoeuvres. I am the most attacked director in Europe and I pay dearly for my independence. After *L'Atlantide* I waited months and months for a proposition which I could accept without caving in.

That's where candour leads you. In Hollywood, von Stroheim has lost his last supports. The set-back—supposed—of *Walking Down Broadway* was sufficient for the backers to withdraw their confidence from one of the greatest craftsmen of the cinema. King Vidor only signed *Street Scene* to get his name on *Bird of Paradise*. As regards Sternberg, I met him in Paris hardly twenty-four hours ago. In America all doors are closed to him. He came to Europe to try to find work. Everybody in France as well as Germany drew back. He leaves again to-night for the States. What will he do there?"

A silence. Then:

"I don't reproach business men for gaining money, or for the desire to earn it. I dream of an understanding between the audience and the director, apart from the production. To appreciate each other they must understand one another. That is why I like to have meetings with cinema journalists in different countries."

"Do you foresee a re-organization of production?"

"Rather the creation of another production better adapted to the needs of those for whom it will be intended."

"Perhaps in collaboration with the state?"

"No! Hitler to-day and Stalin to-morrow! Under an obligation to direct oneself according to the wish of each Government. Never! There must be freedom to follow a determined line once and for all."

"Do you know that *Die Dreigroschenoper* had a great success in Belgium?"

"Did they show both French and German versions?"

"Yes."

"And which did you like best?"

"The one played by Prejean, Florelle, and Gaston Modot. Its alacrity and good humour suited our taste better."

"For me the German copy contained a more precise significance, as well as more bitterness and truth. And so it translated my constant preoccupation."

"A film must take a side."

"The cinema is the mirror of our epoch in which everything must be reflected and imprinted forever."

Attention is drawn to the reviews of the English and French versions of *Don Quixote* in the Review Section. Several points raised by the reviewers, in particular that regarding the slang words used by Sancho Panza, are answered in the above interview.—Review Ed.

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

R. S. LAMBERT

IT has recently been announced that the Film Trade (through its trade organisations) and the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films have reached agreement on a scheme for establishing a British Film Institute, to work, according to the phrase in the Cinematograph Fund Clause of last year's Sunday Performances Act, "for the development of the film as a means of entertainment and instruction." In spite of the fact that film institutes have existed in many foreign countries for some years past, the idea of setting up such an institute here has something of novelty about it. Abroad, where Ministries of Fine Arts are not unknown, where governments and municipalities subsidise music, art and drama, the setting-up of state-controlled film institutes has seemed a natural way of promoting the development, on its artistic and educational side, of a vast new instrument of popular culture and entertainment. But in Britain, steeped still in *laissez-faire* tradition, we do not like this way of doing things. We are all for the indirect, the roundabout, the leaving matters to individual initiative and voluntary enterprise. Therefore it is not surprising that that part of the original plan for setting up a British film institute, which included the government's taking some hand in its constitution and control, has had to be given up. The money with which the Institute will carry out its functions is indeed, we hope to come partly from public sources—in the shape of a grant from the new Cinematograph Fund, which is administered by the Privy Council. Therefore, the Government will require to be satisfied, at any rate, that the British Film Institute is a body properly constituted and run, and deserving of a grant. But apart from this, the new Institute will be free of state-control—a point not without its advantages, at any rate, during the experimental period of its existence.

The scheme for the Film Institute is thus seen to be the

work of two parties, the film trade and the representatives of education. That these two parties, starting to look at the problem from such different angles, should have found it possible to agree together, and go into partnership, as it were, is not the least remarkable achievement of this movement. Common ground exists in the realisation that there are certain aspects of the film—good and promising aspects—which do not develop as fast as we should all like under the strict application of box-office standards. Certain minorities of the public (artistic and scientific, for instance), are not able to see all the films they want. The educational film, to whose desirability everyone pays lip service, makes too slow headway in penetrating the classroom and the lecture room. The possibilities of the film as a vehicle of national consciousness and as an agent for welding together the British Commonwealth of Nations, and for discharging our educational responsibilities towards its less advanced peoples—all these are slow in coming to fruition. The film as entertainment is achieving a maturer technique and reaching a higher standard of satisfaction; but the film as a serious cultural factor is still in the embryonic stage, groping as it were towards the life which everyone knows lies before it.

The Film Institute, then, is intended to help give a lead towards the more rapid realisation of these hopes and possibilities. Every day new experiments are being tried with the film, new societies formed, new companies launched: but the advance is haphazard and somewhat chaotic. A Film Institute is needed to provide a central rallying-point for all the various currents that are contributing towards the movement; a centre for the exchange of information and ideas, for the testing of theories, for the more effective sifting and criticising of film-values, for the undertaking of experiments, for the wedding together and making vocal of a new film public, which has hitherto had but little say.

It must not be assumed that, because the plan for a Film Institute originated with the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, therefore the Institute will be primarily educational, in the formal sense. On the contrary, the terms of the Cinematograph Fund Clause are sufficient to show that no organisation which has solely instructional aims could hope to qualify for grants under the new Act. The Film Institute, indeed, sets out to promote the application of good films of *all* kinds, whether they are industrial, propagandist, scientific, educational, documentary or purely amusement films. It will seek to build up better machinery for the assessment, distribution, and preservation of such films, to

make it easier for those who wish to see such films, to find opportunities of doing so. When we consider, for instance, how difficult it is to-day for film societies to find and show the kind of films which their members want, we must admit the urgency of the need for some central co-ordinating and supplying body, such as this Institute, to supply and serve this particular movement. But film societies are only a few of many organisations needing similar help. The churches, social organisations, many government departments and public authorities, many schools and education authorities, need stimulus, guidance, and practical advice from a central agency. The publication of a complete, reliable, and critical catalogue of films of artistic and scientific value would alone go far to justify the existence of a film institute. And in days to come, we hope that a national repository of such films will be built up, and films will no longer become inaccessible only a year or two after they have been made, but will be preserved permanently for reference and loan.

The Film Institute will not have the resources—even if it were thought desirable (which is doubtful)—to undertake the production of films on its own. Its strength will rather lie in the opportunities which it will create for contact between the producer of films and the intelligent “consumer” of films. The trade will make any film for which it can be shown that there is a market. Therefore the problem of getting films of educational and cultural value produced is the problem of assuring a reasonable market for them. And this is work which only such a body as a Film Institute can hope to perform.

Attempts have been made in some quarters to suggest that the Film Institute will not be truly representative of public opinion, and alternatively that it will be under the thumb of the film trade. These are suppositions for which no ground exists. The Film Institute is to be open to membership both of individuals and organisations which take an interest in the film: and these members will, after the initial year, elect one third of the governing body, which is composed on a tripartite basis of representation of the trade, of education, and of the public. The Film Institute will have its headquarters in London: but already a movement is on foot, as in Liverpool, to form branch societies which can affiliate to the central body and share in its work. Moreover, the constitution provides for the setting up, by the governors, of advisory committees and councils, upon which technical experts and societies concerned with the artistic and scientific aspects of the film can be directly represented. On the other

hand, there is no evidence that film trade interests are likely to have a predominating influence in the Film Institute. One third only of the governing body are representatives of the film trade organisations; and there will be one member of the Institute's staff who will be chosen for his knowledge and experience of trade problems and methods. Also the Institute undertakes not to interfere with the system of film censorship, or with matters of purely trade concern. Surely this represents a minimum, without which it would be difficult to ensure the wholehearted co-operation of the trade in this important experiment? It does not amount to "control," but to a reasonable basis of compromise, in order to ensure smooth working together.

The immediate need is for hearty co-operation between all the various sections of the new film movement. Given such co-operation, the British Film Institute can be made more successful than any other film institute in the world. It is free of bureaucratic control, yet likely to have adequate funds for its work. It starts on a practical basis, with the immense advantage of trade support. It enjoys the confidence and support of educational opinion, as voiced by repeated resolutions of teachers and administrators, and at conferences all over the country. And the proposed scope of its work is large enough to interest all who are concerned with the cultural and artistic aspects of the film.

THE exhibition of Russian Film Stills, recently organised by the Edinburgh Film Guild, has since been repeated in Oxford, under the auspices of the Oxford Arts Club, where it aroused much real interest. During the exhibition, lectures were given by Anthony Asquith and Cedric Belfrage.

The complaint of film producers that there were no more stories left to film was rubbish, said Mr Belfrage. The only formula that producers knew for success was a former success, and 95 per cent. of the films in America and this country were frightening people away from the cinema. Mr Belfrage attacked the present censorship, which he said wanted changing at once. Any faint gleams of intelligence which might creep into a film at present were deleted by the censor (*sic.*). Although it was supposed to safeguard young people it allowed innuendo and took no account of social morality.

THE PASSING OF HOLLYWOOD

ERIC M. KNIGHT

ON the screen the moving lights and shadows dissolve, and the nice-looking young man clasps the alabastine-surfaced blonde. We have come to the end of the three thousandth variation on the love triangle theme. The audience rises, vaguely dissatisfied, somehow, with it all. Going homeward: Kay Francis wasn't so good to-night—she was much better in that other one, you know, where she kept coming out of the wrong door. No, Kay Francis wasn't so good. It wasn't a very good movie, all in all.

Thus, vaguely, audience minds begin to grope toward real cinema; blindly, not knowing why, they reach toward the more cinematic fluidness of Lubitsch without ever knowing his name; half consciously they begin to feel dissatisfied with Hollywood fare.

Thus begins the passing of Hollywood. The golden days are gone for ever; audiences in America grow smaller and smaller; one after another the top heavy superstructures of boomtime Hollywood production topple into bankruptcy, leaving bankers to pump more gold into the veins of a moribund wreck.

Recently Leo Carrilla, at a dinner, faced the critics and said: "You are destructive. Why always destroy?"

He is right. We have wasted too much time attacking Hollywood. We should have had faith—believed that Hollywood would destroy itself. We should have spent our time building plans for the new creativeness that must spring from all parts of the world.

But where, you ask, shall we get films? Will Britain get the share of the business it wants?

Alas, Britain's commercial cinema is, to its shame, even worse than Hollywood's. For although the British mogul shouts loud damnation of American films, excoriates their blatancy, their eternal sex appeal, their mob ideology, he

doesn't really mean it. Scratch a British cinema mogul, and under his skin you will find a man with burning desire to learn how to create movies that are just as blatant, just as sexy, just as mob-appealing, as the Hollywood product. In his heart he wants to ape Hollywood. He would institute the same star-system as Hollywood, feeding the people stars because stars are like dope—they make the people come back for more. He would like to make his films just as shiny as American ones, just as pluperfectly superficial, just as steely in quality, just as warped in plot matter. He would like to build the same false system of scenario writing, in which written-word merchants control the director who would become a real creator in celluloid.

Progress can come only in both Britain and America, from individuals of courage, men with ability to think independently about the medium, who will learn its own language, and who, while carrying forward the now-forming technique, will have enough maturity to be able to say something worth hearing in the new expressionistic and impressionistic methods.

The end of commercially-made cinema will come soon, as far as intelligent persons are concerned. We shall always have a great supply of screen opiates for tired toilers, just as we shall always have those sentimental magazines that delight the hearts of shopgirls the world over. But we shall have, also, the work of the independent artist, and to that end those who believe in the film must work—on both sides of the ocean.

The supporter of the cinema must believe that firmly. Those who moan over passing time must remember that printed literature of manly stature did not leap forth fully armed, like Pallas, as soon as printing arrived. Always the means come long before we get men who learn how to use them. And it is a long trail—learning to speak a new language. We have not yet learned the alphabet of cinema.

To illustrate, we all know that we can set a camera fixed on a tripod, we can shoot downwards on our material, shoot from the floor up, tilt the camera, roll it on a tricycle. We can have a flying camera, we can pan in any direction. All that is part of the new alphabet. We all use those methods. Yet who will tell me exactly the purpose of each? When should we roll a camera and when keep it fixed? Under what conditions is a flying camera a legitimate expression and when is it merely a

stunt? What real visual expression do we get from a bird's-eye shot and what does a worm's-eye shot say?

I will not carry into further fields, asking what is the effect of a fade-out, what does a lap dissolve express, when is a close-up used correctly, is the wipe-off of any worth? Each of these methods has an effect upon the onlookers. Just what is that psychological reaction?

Even such a simple matter as the pan of the camera has never been thoroughly studied. You may know, as Eric Charell showed he knew in *Congress Dances*, that it is graceful to pan to the right (or introduce material from the right—same thing). Why is it productive of restlessness when the screen pans to the left? There is a reason. The answer is quite apparent if you think a while. And when you find out you'll never pan to the left again unless you wish your film, at that point, to excite in the onlooker an impression of unrest or impending danger.

All these elementary letters and phrases of the new cinema language we are learning—and "we" is not the commercial cinema but the independent creator. To the independent creator on both sides of the water we must look for progress, and it doesn't matter a whoop whether he's working in 35 mm. or 16 mm. The size of a canvas never had anything to do with the stature of a painter.

America goes forward with the new 16 mm. sound-on-film cameras, determined on one thing—that sound-tracks shall not be used to create talkies. We have discovered, too, that most camera enthusiasts have little or no knowledge of what to say in "story" matter; while those who have something to say don't know how to say it through the camera. Hence that entirely false thing known as the scenario. When we combine in men the fiction-telling ability and the creative screen sense, we shall have men conceiving and expressing a story entirely in terms of cinema. And then they'll no more need to write it in words before they shoot than a novelist needs to paint a picture of his hero before he can write about him.

In the meantime, it is time we stopped barking at Hollywood and Elstree. Let them die their own deaths without any nudging. We have something more important that demands all the time we shall have in our short lives: we've got to learn how to speak this new, fascinating, all-powerful film language. Until now commercial motion-pictures have merely been stuttering on a new alphabet. We've got to learn how to spell words and make the first phrases in a totally new expressive medium.

PROGRESS IN FILM APPRECIATION

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F. A. HOARE

NO form of public entertainment has been subjected to more searching criticism during the past few years than has the cinema. It is not surprising that many sections of the film trade have grown increasingly impatient of the ignorant criticisms of those who "never go to the pictures" (to use their own phrase) but regard them as decadent and demoralising. On the other hand there is a not inconsiderable section of the community which, while regarding the film as a potential art form of high intrinsic merit, is disappointed with the progress it makes under the rigorous conditions imposed by mainly commercial considerations.

To this group presumably belong those who form the main body of the membership of film societies and certainly large sections of the various educational, cultural and scientific interests which support the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films in its endeavour to bring into being a National Film Institute. They oppose positive and constructive action to the deadening and destroying influence of censorship and prohibitive regulation and seek for ways and means of developing a more critical sense of cinema values in the hope that the progress of the film as a form of intelligent entertainment, as an educational medium, and as a documentary record of scientific research or of historical event, may be accelerated.

These considerations give rise to a problem about which opinion differs vastly. How far is it necessary to the progress of any art that there shall be a widespread understanding of the technique it involves? Is it not positively an advantage if the masses of the lay public leave such matters to those few professionally engaged in its practice? Whatever may be the answer to questions such as these in relation to the art of music or painting or sculpture,

there can be no doubt that in regard to the cinema its universal appeal makes the development of an informed and critical understanding vital to its progress. This does not mean that we have to try and convert all film-goers into potential directors, but simply that they should have a minimum of understanding about such elementary facts of filmcraft as rhythm, sequence, cutting, tempo or picture composition. I do not profess to know how far this study of technique should go in respect of particular individuals or groups of individuals, but I am sure it ought not to be an abstract thing. That is why I would prefer to see the new generation trained to appreciate good cinema by giving them an opportunity to study and discuss the work of the masters in film direction, like Eisenstein or Clair or Lubitsch, rather than that they should be lectured on the subject by pedagogues.

Happily there are signs of a movement in the right direction. More and more schools, adult education societies, and study groups of all types and classes are turning to films and are working towards an understanding of what have been unhappily described as film aesthetics. More and more teachers and educationists believe it to be part of their job to help people to recognise and reject the spurious and banal in cinema, just as they would in literature or music. The movement is not confined to one class of the community; Eton has its Film Society, and there are groups of factory workers who come together weekly to see and discuss films which are not usually to be seen in cinemas. The advances made in the manufacture of portable reproducing apparatus now bring the possibility of film shows within the reach of every school, society and institution throughout the country.

This new and growing urge to understand and to appreciate more fully the art of the film is not directed against the public cinema house. On the contrary it is likely to have a stimulating effect on the "trade" both at the producing and exhibiting ends. It is a tendency to be encouraged by all who want to see the cinema occupying its proper place in the cultural, educational and recreational life of the community and satisfying increasingly the demands of those who form a steadily growing, intelligent section of the general public.

This work should be regarded as educational in the broadest sense. It involves considerations which transcend in importance the limited problems surrounding the use of the film for purely teaching purposes—the didactic film.

The film society movement in making available films which are not normally seen in public cinemas, apart from the Academy and one or two others of that type, is doing a job which is capable of almost indefinite expansion. Nobody blames the exhibitor for declining to experiment upon his patrons with the unusual. It is a risky job financially. The tendency, however, is for the majority of films to be made to type; that is, to be made to meet the intellectual standard of the masses who pay to see them.

The experimenter among producers is a courageous being and there are not many of him. Most people like to encourage those who are willing to adventure and to leave the beaten and well-worn track for the dangers and thrills of the unexplored hinterland. There ought to be the possibility at least of getting the results of such adventures in film production distributed and exhibited to those who want to see them. It is generally agreed that the limitations imposed upon the art of the film by the requirements of the less educated should not be allowed to prevent the satisfying of the film needs of the more educated. This is not a plea for the so-called "high-brow" cinema; it is simply a commonsense argument for more varied intellectual quality in films and the opportunity for discriminating choice on the part of the various sections of the film-going public, actual and potential.

It ought also to be said that intelligent films are not necessarily synonymous with continental films. The fashion which decries all products which do not originate in Russia or Germany or France is patent nonsense. No one country has a monopoly of film talent and there are certainly some British and American films which compare favourably with the best continental productions. The opportunity to see and appraise the best films of as many countries as possible is an essential condition of sane criticism, and this opportunity can be secured by the development of film study groups in association with many social organisations.

Facilities for so doing became available to people even in remote parts of the country with the development of portable sound film reproducing systems for purchase or hire. It is clear that interest in the progress of the machinery of film recording and reproduction is by no means confined to engineers and film technicians. Most notable of all recent developments is the advance made with 16 mm. sound reproduction in both the sound-on-disc

and sound-on-film types. The former particularly solves the problem of simplicity in operation, for no greater skill is required than that involved in operating a radio-gram! It is true that the supply of 16 mm. sound films is limited at the present time, but as the demand develops alongside facilities for their exhibition, the supply will doubtless be speeded up. Already arrangements for the formation of 16 mm. sound film libraries are in hand, and the preparation of fresh material is being undertaken in association with educational and other experts. In the projection of standard-sized films, portable apparatus also gives admirable results, and it is safe to say that exhibitions can be given in any hall in any part of the country, so that the study of films and the development of a critical appreciation can now be undertaken in villages and in the remoter country districts as well as in the large towns and cities where the film society movement has already taken root.

Here then are the beginnings of new ventures in the field of cinematography and their success is to a large extent assured by the support forthcoming for them, not only from educational and social bodies, but also from all sections of the film trade. The cinema can no longer be regarded merely as a simple means of amusement; it has already entered successfully into a sphere of learning and culture where its progress is definitely assured.

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FLAHERTY has now almost completed shooting *Man of Aran*, the film of life on the Aran Islands which was discussed in the first number of *Cinema Quarterly*, and is being made under the auspices of Gaumont-British. At the beginning of July his unit was still on Aranmore, the largest of the islands, delay having been caused by unsuitable weather conditions. Further difficulty has been caused from time to time by lack of water for developing and printing. And frequently communication with the Irish mainland has been cut off by storms. But, after eighteen months of strenuous work, the first stage of the film is nearing completion, and it is anticipated that the rough-cut copy of *Man of Aran* will be at the Gainsborough Studios at Islington before the end of July. Flaherty has been accompanied for most of the time by his wife, who has acted as assistant director and is now engaged in classifying over two thousand stills, mostly taken by herself.

DIRECTORS' NOTEBOOK

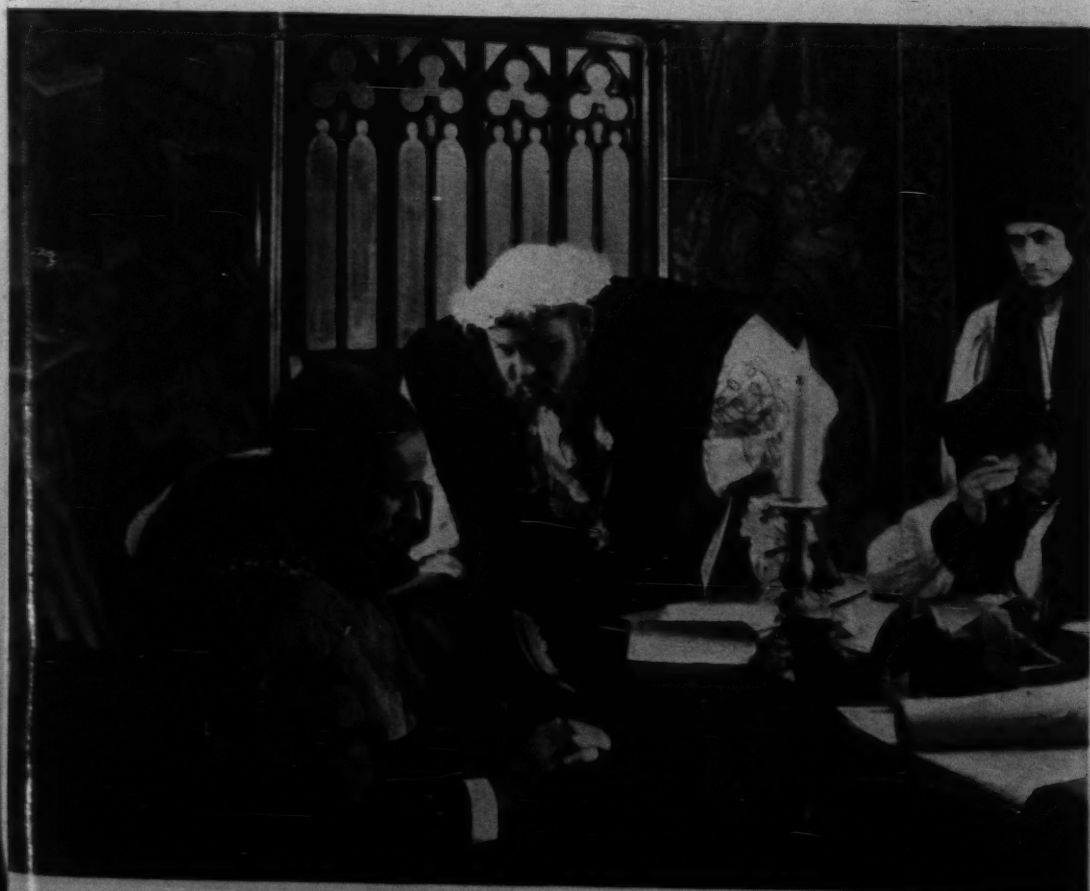
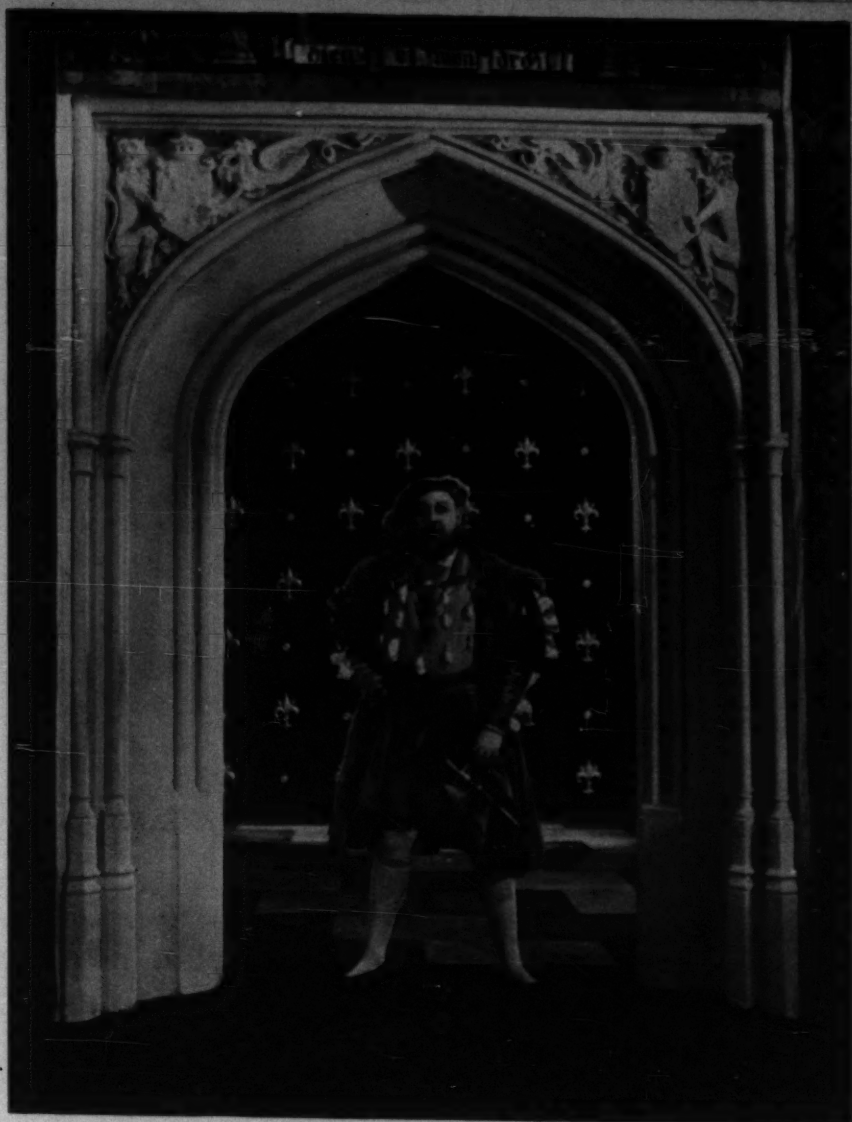
ADAPTATION.—The phrase "screen adaptation" covers a multitude of sins. Ask any author who has been lucky or unlucky enough, as the case may be, to have had his work turned into film material, and he will probably agree! Yet of all the jobs that a motion picture director has to undertake in producing a film, the adaptation of the story to screen terms should prove the most engrossing. If the supply of film directors was great enough to fulfil the demand, then a director would have no need to adapt somebody else's work—he would have time to present his own ideas—time enough to write and direct an original story, but as this would mean one picture a year per director, the output would shrink to such a low point that the studios would be uneconomical to operate. Therefore, most of the films I make are adaptations from some play, novel, or original screen story. My adaptations usually assume as close a relationship as if the original story was my own work—the foster-child is so carefully nurtured that it becomes like one's own child. However good the intentions, it is quite easy to destroy a good story in turning it from one medium into another unless a point is aimed at, and the point at which to aim is the spirit of the work and not the letter. The mechanical movings of the characters is relatively unimportant—it is the characterisation of individuals that counts. Most writers, especially for screen purposes, first of all plan their characters, then through the peculiarities of characterisation the story can only be motivated one way, and that is the way that the characterisation suggests. It therefore follows in adapting a story that the mere way a thing is done is not of supreme importance—it is the climax the story arrives at, which should be identical with the author's ideas. When a man has the space of a novel to describe the peculiarities of his characters, he can without thought of time or place arrange certain plot motivations which would be impossible to condense into the short space and time that a film subject allows. It is therefore the primary duty of an adaptor once he has made up his mind

that his characters should arrive at the same climax as the original author suggests, to construct dramatically his film story, so that the author's characters arrive at their appointed end in the most dramatic, direct, and comprehensive film form possible.

It has been my privilege to meet and adapt books, plays and original stories by A. A. Milne, the late Arnold Bennett, J. B. Priestley, Ian Hay, Colonel Hutchinson, Monckton Hoffe, and Warwick Deeping, and in all cases I have received the warmest co-operation because I have made it clear from the outline of the first film treatment that it was my desire to preserve the full characterisation of the dramatic personae as described by these eminent authors, and once you have established your willingness and desire in your adaptation to follow closely the characters as planned by the author, any author—however eminent—would be only too willing to bow to one's superior film knowledge as to the dramatic film rendering of the characters.

In the adaptation of *The Good Companions* we were faced with a difficult problem of attempting to please both the author and his large reading and play-going public who had read the book and seen his long-run play. Whether we were completely successful or not I cannot say, but I do know that the most difficult part of this adaptation was to show the concert party *The Good Companions* experiencing both its good and bad fortune, and yet keep within the relatively short time that could be allowed out of the whole film for this particular part of the story. Obviously when *The Good Companions* started on their tour there would have been no suspense if they were immediately successful. The play was unable to deal with this point—they made the company an instantaneous financial success. Obviously the troupe must not be allowed to fail through their own faults, otherwise they could not be successful performers in the end. There had to be some cause or some kick of fate that first of all downed the party and then raised them after they had reached the lowest depths. Mr Priestley admirably deals with this situation in his book in what he describes as "Black Week," and one sees circumstances overcoming all the members of *The Good Companions* until they are no longer good companions but are worn out and desperate. This is the climax one has to work up so that the character of Jess Oakroyd may be used to rally the party into "having another do at it" and turning the corner, this time to triumph. With the

Charles Laughton
in "The Private
Life of Henry VIII"
(London Film Productions).
Direction is by
Alexander Korda
and the
photography
by Georges Périnal.





From the outdoor sequence of a new film
dealing with the British telephone service,
directed by Stuart Legg.



space that a literary explanation commands, Mr Priestley delights us with the description of the vicissitudes that fortune holds for these characters, but it was a difficult thing to arrive at that point in a film adaptation. There had to be circumstances that would bring misfortune; such circumstances could not be motivated through the bad performance of the players—their “Black Week” should be brought about by something outside their control. I chose the weather, as the weather can always beat a theatrical show. In this case *The Good Companions* booked inside dates, i.e., playing in halls instead of seaside piers, etc., but the weather was too hot and nobody would go inside, and so through no fault of their own I brought *The Good Companions* down to their lowest ebb to allow Jess Oakroyd to rally them and put them on the road to prosperity: this was dramatised by the timely arrival of wet weather. I am writing of this adaptation at length to illustrate my point of how to arrive at the same climax as the author, but not necessarily by the same road. Mr Priestley’s road is literary, sound and beautiful—my road was dramatic, direct and forceful.

When one reads a criticism of a film which says “this story should not have been made into a film—it is not a film story,” that is no reflection on the author—it is a reflection on the adaptor. If a man is cinema-minded enough and knows his job there is nothing that is not adaptable into a film subject. Even the *A B C* contains a wealth of romance!

VICTOR SAVILLE.

SUPERIMPOSITION.—Relationships formed by the combination of two or more images on one film strip can fulfil several functions. They can serve to make a plain statement by throwing hitherto unconnected images into relationship; to accentuate tempo by a double emphasis to action and rhythm; to render more impressive an account of a natural process by adding to the movement and form of a shot; to cause emergence of one state from another by a development of the method of the dissolve; to bring about at a given moment combined subjective and objective aspects of a situation by a conjunction of images, each expressing a single viewpoint.

But, in whatever way superimposition is to be used, care must be taken not to interfere with the constructional rules of movie. Superimposition is often an attempt to convey an abstract idea in terms of concrete images.

Cinema lends itself to the formation of simple imagistic relationships by reason of its powers of direct juxtaposition: but it cannot express abstractions of any but the lowest degree. Therefore any superimposition must be part and parcel of the narrative of the film, and the images used must be taken from a source natural to the theme and material. Discursiveness will lead only to confusion.

Equal regard must be paid to the tempo of the section in which superimposition is to take place. If an audience, being carried along at the speed of an unbroken sequence, is suddenly confronted by an abstract idea having no time, and therefore bearing no relation in tempo to the foregoing shots, non-comprehension is almost inevitable.

Superimposition must therefore not only be closely woven into narrative and tempo, but must be used so that its own peculiar power of forming one abstraction from two or more concretes plays a simple and direct part in strengthening and elucidating them.

STUART LEGG.

SENSES AND SENSIBILITIES.—Sound and silence may be regarded as the knife and fork for the dramatist's meat, and sometimes it is a delicate question, how to manipulate these instruments.

Suppose the episode of a man walking along a lonely road in daylight. He is knocked down by a car. A crash of glass as he is thrown against the windscreen. Up to this point we see and hear. But immediately after the shock of the impact we might cut off all the sound in the world. **SILENCE:** leads to concentrative vision. The eye sees very keenly, following naturally the one moving object, the car, until that is out of scene; the eye then, left with stillness and silence, returns to an inevitable centre on the man's body by the roadside. If necessary, iris out.

Now that is being sympathetic to the senses—to sentient observation. An alternative is being sympathetic to a mental faculty—to emotional observation. For the crash of the collision might be made the starting point of significant audibility, the noise of the car's rush to be caught up here and aurally transformed until it becomes a vehement, imprecating accompaniment to a general confusion. What becomes of the car from this instant, neither the eye nor the ear can really know; and as for what becomes of the body there is, in such circumstances,

only one thing to do with it, and that is to keep throwing some image of it at the eye.

To compromise, the two treatments might be unified. After a long, silent registration of the senseless body, we could recall the sound of the vanished car, making it respond now to the circumstance still visually impressed. Not "heard off"—intimate with microphone—"heard in the mind." Perhaps transformed into a sustained whine of lamentation, or perhaps as a distressful sobbing that cuts in between spaces of silence.

For the first and the third styles of treatment, I stipulate two visual necessities. The car, once it is out of the scene, ought never to appear again in the episode; and the shot of the body in the roadway, once visually settled, ought to be held fixed and unchanged, throughout the phases of silence and sound.

ERIC ELLIOTT.

SHOOTING IN THE TROPICS.—On a very rushed tour of the West Indies and British Guiana, one of the biggest problems encountered was that of being forced to shoot in the middle of the day. The light is blindingly brilliant and yet very lacking in actinic value. Shadows are pitch black and kill all detail. This is aggravated by the fact that it is impossible to "open up" or under-filter to any great extent without getting a very flat and uninteresting negative. The crux of this problem was encountered when negro types had to be shot. With bright direct sunlight coming from overhead, it was almost impossible to get a good quality negative and yet retain the negro features. Rubbing the face and arms of the subject with butter or oil only brought up a few highlights, even when aided by reflectors. Finally the problem was temporarily solved by staging scenes *in the shade* and using reflectors only. (The reflectors were four feet by two feet, covered with tinfoil. I had only two). This gave an approximate lighting similarity to that of late evening sunlight—the only possible time for good shooting. Exposure under these circumstances was generally $f5.6$, with a Wratten K2 filter.

For future productions in the Tropics I am inclined to go all out on reflectors. I suspect that some of the loveliest things in Walter Creighton's recent material from Africa owe a good deal to reflectors.

I envisage for my own equipment a "bank" of about one dozen reflectors of the four by two size with possibly an outsize one for emergencies. Following on Elton's ex-

periments with gauze, I propose to try diffusing patches of reflected light by means of white or grey gauze screens. It should be possible to light an exterior set in varying degrees of intensity according to the emphasis desired. This arrangement should give a very much more comprehensive range of filters; experiments with Wratten F and Agfa 21 should be especially interesting. For Tropical work I consider the widest possible range of graduated filters to be essential.

BASIL WRIGHT.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

IN the second number of *Cinema Quarterly* there appeared an outspoken article by Seymour Stern, in which, for the first time, the tragic fate of Eisenstein's American film, *Que Viva Mexico!* was fully exposed. This article was widely quoted, and may have done something to influence public opinion in what has become an international campaign.

The following quotations are taken from a long letter from Seymour Stern, received too late for publication in full:—

"When I sent you my last cable saying 'situation changed' . . . there followed a long series of meetings, conferences, friendly evenings, etc., between the Sinclairs and myself. . . . My attitude was that, even if the things they said against Eisenstein were true, the film should not be destroyed: the world should not be deprived of the opportunity of having the real *Que Viva Mexico!* Their constant reply to these arguments was that they had their duty to the investors, etc. Finally, I was invited to a private showing of a film called *Thunder Over Mexico*, directed by S. M. Eisenstein and edited by Sol Lesser and a group of professional cutters.

"It will be long before I shall be able to describe in a disinterested manner my feelings as I sat there watching eight reels of unspeakable desecration of Eisenstein's masterpiece. The details are not important now. It is enough for you to know that, of the original epic conception of Mexico which was so typically Eisenstein's, and of the sublime vision and interpretation of that country which would have forced everyone else to see Mexico as Eisenstein saw it, nothing, absolutely nothing, remains except Tissé's magnificent photography. All else, the conception, the interpretation, the historical and prophetic vision, in all its overtones, the construction which Eisenstein had intimated in the scenario—all this has been destroyed.

"We are trying to get as many people as possible to send letters of protest to Sol Lesser, 7000 Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, California, U.S.A., denouncing his destruction of Eisenstein's original vision of Mexico. Will you, therefore, send such a letter to Lesser yourself, and get as many of your friends and associates in Edinburgh, London, Paris, etc., to do likewise?

"If the film societies wish to send their protests to Upton Sinclair, they may write or wire to him at 614 North Arden Drive, Beverley Hills, California, U.S.A."

THE MISCELLANY

EXPRESSIONISM : GERM OF THE SOUND-FILM.—

It was in 1917 that expressionism made its appearance in Germany. Georg Kaiser's *Die Koralie*, one of the earliest examples, created tremendous excitement. At that time, we were all undecided how to take it. Our minds fluctuated between surprise and repulsion. The new dramatic movement seemed to lead into a blind alley. To-day some of us recognise that in expressionism there is already to be found the germ of the sound-film. Expressionism wanted to chisel out the physiognomy of the world, to nail down the physiognomy of types and things. The single concentrated word, slung out by the speaker like a stone from a catapult, was to contain a complex of thought and emotion. The word or the phrase, standing by itself, became visual and was meant to convey to the listener the concise idea without any psychological detours. Its dialogues were like telegraphic wording. It renounced the original laws of drama and threaded its scenes loosely together without combining them logically. The actor's body in his bearing and gesture was to express the poet's idea and make phrasing unnecessary. Plays by Kornfeld, Sorge, Hasenclever, the pioneers of expressionism, began a new style. The decorative scenery on the stage was linked up with expressionistic painting, its renowned sister, and only the actor remained what he was, tied up to his own bodily naturalism, restrained by the century-old tradition of his means of expression. We actors had a hard job at that time. The new style of theatrical art excited our imagination. We struggled honestly and desperately for a new method of expression. We started to behave "expressionistically": we reduced our gestures to the minimum of active movement. In our ambition to become abstract, we went to the extreme and became as stiff as sticks. And yet there were some who soon picked up their own clever style of acting, who attained a certain virtuosity in their diction and declamation. But whether good or bad, this sort of acting after all remained anaemic and academic and hardly made anyone laugh or cry. The inborn vitality of the actor soon gave up the battle with the abstract and it would be inter-

esting to know whether the disappearance of stage expressionism had its reason partly in the fact that the actors could not play it. Yet we have certainly got something out of this period. We actors learned to be more concentrated, not to lose ourselves in emotional pauses, to make the body a more controlled vehicle of the spirit. All these qualities lead up to the sound-film. They include everything the film demands and needs—preciseness in speech and gesture. Actors who went through the expressionistic period in Germany have, perhaps unconsciously, profited by its style. With artists like Werner Kraus, Eugen Klopfer, Heinrich George and also with the greatest film actress of the silent days, Asta Nielsen, this transparency of expression, this economy of gesture, can be noticed.

LEONTINE SAGAN.

ANOTHER FILM "CARNAGE." The butchery of Eisenstein's great sociological film of Mexico, *Que Viva Mexico!* has been so far reaching in effect that it has partly overshadowed another film carnage, that of Erich von Stroheim's first sound film, *Walking Down Broadway*, which emerged under the guise of the idiomatic *Hello, Sister!* with nary a touch of the eccentric Austrian genius to distinguish it from the common every-day run of Hollywood drivel.

Whereas previous Stroheim films had been cut by the Hay's organization (not one ever escaped wholesale cutting) from their original sophisticated state to something bordering on dressed up pageantry, the version in each case released bore some semblance to the original and contained, at least a modicum of scenes directed by the master of realism himself. Even *Greed* in its mutilated form was a great film. But there remains not a single scene of *Hello, Sister!* that one can isolate as having been fashioned by the hand that made either *Greed* or *Foolish Wives*. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the picture, after it was previewed in its original state was sent back for re-shooting. The director who did the re-takes took his orders too literally—because he literally re-shot the whole film. No director is credited for the film, I can understand why von Stroheim wishes no credit—but then, the result is so atrocious that even the substitute director didn't insist on any credit title.

Queen Kelly, von Stroheim's ill-fated previous film which was to have served as a vehicle for the glorious Gloria Swan-

son, never was finished for reasons among them being a clashing of temperaments between director and star, the sudden emergence of talking pictures and the general unsavouriness of the theme for the spotless American scene. The film wasn't considered too unsavoury for Europe, however, as the financial backers have planned to release as much as was done of it throughout the Continent in an effort to retrieve something of the quarter of a million dollars reputed to have been spent on it.

And, thus, the one man in America who could have become the figure that Pabst is in Europe, has found himself squelched at every turn by the money grubbers of Hollywood, not even given a chance to prove that he has the greatest directorial talent in America.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

FILMS IN THE WEST INDIES.—(Note. Bermuda and the Bahamas are not included in these notes.). Nearly all West Indian Islands have cinemas, and most of them are wired for sound. Jamaica and, I think, St Lucia are the only ones independent of a monopoly with headquarters in Trinidad. This monopoly until recently had complete control over the Carribbean islands and also over British Guiana. On the smaller islands it runs cinemas seating between 300 and 600: the Empire at Barbados is larger, seating about 800. The Empire Cinema at Port of Spain, Trinidad, seats a full 900, and I believe the Empire at Georgetown, British Guiana, is as big. Recently the monopoly has been challenged; various firms, backed by M-G-M, have been putting up rival establishments with no small success. The Metro, in Port of Spain, is a magnificent building and seats 1,700. There are similar challenges in Georgetown and Barbados.

Jamaica has a chain of cinemas under one ownership. These range from the Palace, in Kingston, a glorious open-air place, seating about 2,000 and with the best acoustics I have yet heard, to the local cinemas throughout the island which seat on an average 500. In projection and sound reproduction, Jamaica is streets ahead of any of the other islands. In fact my general experience elsewhere was that I very rarely heard an intelligible word emerge from the speakers, while the screen image was patchily brown. In Jamaica all cinemas visited had sound reproduction of quite amazing clarity. It is difficult to cater for mixed audiences. I had the (personal) pleasure of hearing *Michael and Mary*

very nearly "raspberried" off the screen by a negro pit, while a white upper circle squirmed in horrified righteousness. *Wedding Rehearsal* was a flop in Jamaica, while *Sign of the Cross* broke all records since *Ben Hur*.

Ideal Cinemagazine is almost as popular as Disney. Prices are about the same as in England, outside the West End area. Some cinemas are almost entirely given over to negroes, and are not visited by respectable whites. These usually run Westerners or flaming-youth second-raters. They are great fun.

Interesting biological note from Kingston:—No manager would dare to put up his lights between films. If he did, a snake-like hissing or Laurentian foot stamping from the fourpennies would be an easy "let-off" for him. Some of the pit comments heard at various cinemas compared very favourably with those heard in University Towns.

BASIL WRIGHT.

AN OMNIBUS REVIEW: the Critics on the German epic, *Trambuskonduktorheit*.

IN THE MOVIES.—By A. C. L'IMORTELLE.

Hats off to Alexis Tablecloth, efficient publicity manager of the Criterion, for allowing us to see *Trambuskonduktorheit* in its original form. Hats off to Director Knud Slavitchz in tackling Zug's epic work. And hats off to the British public for supporting the film. Even if this job of work does not go sufficiently to the guts of the problem, it is a step in the right direction. In *Trambuskonduktorheit* the problem of living is brought home to you and to me, from Stornoway to Stoke-on-Trent, with an urgent guts and sincerity which is good to look upon. It is the stuff o' life! For us every one of that tough bunch of guys lives with the intensity and passionate intelligence of the modern highly educated industrial. But when are we going to have a *Trambuskonduktorheit* of our own? I have asked that before, and I will go on asking it. There are only two men in England to-day who can answer me. They are the Verandah brothers. In them is the very stuff o' guts. I want to see England set upon the map . . . its people hoping, believing, fearing, praying . . . as *Trambuskonduktor* has set *Aborteburg* upon the map. I want to see Liverpool and London, Oswestry and Oswaldthwistle done justice to. And when I do, and not until then, I will cry in our gruff Scottish speech: "Ba goom, ba goom and ba goom!" The part of Hedda is played by that grand old trouper Lilli Baumenturd.

TRAMBUSKONDUKTORHEIT.—By SEXTON BLAKES-
TON.

Point.

Counterpoint.

Point blank. Counterjumper. Pullover.

Tramlines converging. Clamorous under flangy wheels.

(The hands of Lilli Baumenturd.)

Lilli Baumenturd plays *Hedda*. *Hedda* plays with her hands.

Pullover. Counterjumper. Point blank.

Counterpoint.

(THE HANDS OF LILLI BAUMENTURD!)

point.

S. B.

TRAMBUSKONDUKTORHEIT.—By OSRIC (bats-in-the) BELFRY.

Lilli Baumenturd plays *Hedda* in *Trambuskonduktorheit*. She also plays hell. But go and see it yourselves. The last time I saw Lilli was in Hollywood in '28, before her divorce. I was leaning out of the windows of Second International when she passed below, and laughingly dropped two sun-arcs and a Bell on her. What she said then doesn't matter to you or me, but it gave old Joe Ginsberg the idea which led to her being created *la* Baumenturd. And that's good enough for us, boys! I liked *Trambuskonduktorheit* a lot.

TRAMBUSKONDUKTORHEIT.—Reviewed by *The Renter's Weekly Racket*.

Trambuskonduktorheit is going to mean a pain in the neck for the renter, and should mean a pain in the pants for Littleby Hokum who introduced it to the N.B.G. circuit. All-highbrow, all-art, all-dupe, this German epic is not going to gross a farthing when it gets out of London town. For quick-fire failure this is a box office cert. Old Frau Baumenturd plays a strong rôle and rolls a strong play into a flop. The masses will not stand for this reviving of an outworn legit. star and plugging her dial from one angle to another in one long close-up (N.B.G. circuit "A.")

J. N. G. D.

SCREEN CARICATURE.—The announcement that H. M. Bateman is to produce a series of screen cartoons in this country in welcome news to those who have felt for so long that the cinema might be employed as a medium by some of those artists who have given modern English comic draughtsmanship a position of international pre-eminence. Walt Disney's achievement stands as proof that the screen cartoon need not be an insignificant or inferior form of expression. His Silly Symphonies and the Mickey Mouse cartoons have made a rich and vigorous contribution to entertainment; in their unique combination of music and movement they have opened up new avenues of film development; and Disney has employed them as a medium of comic criticism, with a satirical approach to society similar to that of the American strip cartoonists. But Disney's achievement, great as it has been, does not represent the limit of development in the sphere of the drawn film. It may be that Bateman, whose work is sharply individual, may evolve a new form in which to express his comic genius. Further, the drawn film need not always concern itself with the simpler aspects of humour. Disney's latest Silly Symphonies have a touch of lyricism in their nonsense that brings them near poetry. And, in a different direction, there seems no reason why, in the hands of a satirist, the drawn film should not become a medium for caricature. With this future possible film development in mind, a reading of "Modern Caricaturists" by H. R. Westwood (London: Lovat Dickson. 15s.) is an instructive experience. This is an engrossing study and analysis of the foremost artists in modern newspaper caricature, presented in the form of a series of essays, with numerous admirable illustrations. Its scope is international and among those included in the survey are Low, Strube and Will Dyson, Louis Raemaekers of the Amsterdam *Telegraaf*, Gulbransson of *Simplicissimus*, Kapp, Thomas Derrick and Powys Evans, the American cartoonists and the French and Australian groups. Among the illustrations of Dyson's work are several etchings on Hollywood, two of which are reproduced on another page. Low's introduction on the art of caricature shows an acute understanding of the principles of humour. Were he ever to consider the drawn film as a medium of expression, the screen would be enlivened by the work of a brilliant wit and a masterly draughtsman.

FORSYTH HARDY.

THE CINEMA LIBRARY

A GUIDE TO EDUCATIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS. (London: Central Bureau for Educational Films. 3s. 6d.) This comprehensive and carefully annotated catalogue contains particulars of some 2000 educational films, on 35mm, 16mm and 9.5mm stock, available through various sources for hire in this country. Though the tuition value of the films listed varies greatly (what, for instance, are *The Lodger* and *Alf's Carpet* doing here?) everyone interested in the development of the cinema as an aid to education will be surprised and gratified to learn that such a wealth of material is already in existence. J. Russell Orr and W. H. Sampson, the directors of the Bureau, are to be congratulated on their enterprise in compiling this much needed and valuable catalogue.

KINEMATOGRAPH YEAR BOOK, 1933. (London: Odhams. 10s.) The new issue of the Kine Year Book, conveniently arranged for ready reference, is as usual an indispensable source of information for all connected with the cinema. The events of the year are summarised and the year's productions recorded in detail. There is a comprehensive directory of trade addresses, a who's who and an important legal section, as well as many other useful features. If all film society secretaries possessed this volume both they and the renters would be saved much profitless correspondence.

THE MAGNIFICENT—By Terence Greenidge. (London: The Fortune Press. 7s. 6d.) The association of films and sex has become almost hallowed by tradition, so that this novel can at least claim the novelty of combining, in about equal proportions, films and homosexuality—with a dash of Socialism added. "The Magnificent" is the admiring title bestowed on Derek Alderstone, a Hollywood star who graduates in English studios, by an "assistant director" who tells his own story under the impression that he is telling Alderstone's story. But then, the characters in the book in general have a facility for giving themselves and giving themselves away with an engaging candour.

M. S.

FILM DAILY YEAR BOOK, 1933. (New York: *Film Daily*.) This admirably produced and arranged volume of over 1000 pages is a positive encyclopaedia of world cinema, invaluable to the student as well as the trade. One of its most useful features is a list giving unusually full production details and cast of every film shown in America during the past year. There are also a list of over 13,000 films released since 1915, particulars of the work of the leading directors, technicians and players, a review of world conditions and tendencies, and numerous useful directories. Almost anything you want to know about the cinema to-day will be found in these pages.

THE AMERICAN ANNUAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1933 (to be had in Britain from Sands Hunter, London), contains several articles of interest to the amateur filmmaker, including "Light and its Application," "Character Make-up," "Cine Titles," and a review of recent technical developments. Of the other contributions, F. Dwight Kirsch's study of composition will appeal to cine workers as well as to still photographers. Pictorial illustrations are numerous, but lose something in value by being printed in sepia.

M. R.

PHOTO-EYE—Edited by Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold. (Stuttgart: Wedekind & Co. RM. 7.50.) Intended to give "a cross section of up-to-date development in photography" this collection of 76 photographs includes examples of reality-photo, photo without camera, photo-montage, photo and painting, and photo-typography. Only what the editors regard as an expression of the new age has been accepted, and though many of the examples will be considered precious and arouse derision, the collection as a whole is a revelation of the possibilities of photography as an art medium. If there exists anyone who still despises the camera (not the cameraman!) this volume should be presented to him.

M. R.

LUCI ED OMBRE, XI. (Torino: *Il Corriere Fotografico*. 25 lire.) Beautifully produced on modern lines, this annual consists entirely of examples of current Italian photography. Pictorialism rather than expressionism is the chief characteristic of this year's collection which includes a wide range of subjects and shows that in sensitiveness of approach and quality of workmanship the Italian photographer has to-day few superiors.

THROUGH A LENS DARKLY—By Franz Seldte. (London: Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.) This book from the German, is issued as a novel, but according to the publishers the story is a thinly veiled account of the actual experiences of the author as organiser of film propaganda and as commander of a film unit which operated on the Western and Italian fronts. The book is clearly written not for the student of films, but for the general reader, so that it would be unreasonable to expect anything in the way of technicalities. There are, in fact, none, beyond one synopsis of titles, a couple of references to light conditions, and a couple of very brief tables of footage. The general interest of this narrative of the War from a German standpoint is another matter, apropos of which it is relevant to add that the author founded the organisation of the Steel Helmets and has received Cabinet rank from Hitler.

M. S.

CITY WITHOUT A HEART. (London: Heinemann. 7s. 6d.) This anonymous novel tells a sorrowful story of an innocent little Cornish fisher-girl who, simple and unsophisticated if sincere and honest, goes out to America to be a star, and is horrified to discover "the ugly falsities" of a Hollywood "whose great men are monsters of greed, where simplicity is merely something the public will pay to see. . . ." The author seeks to "expose" Hollywood in the now familiar manner but there is a bitterness in the writing which, if it makes for pungency, creates a less favourable impression than the witty satire of "Once in a Lifetime." Typical of the author's attitude towards cinema is the following observation of one of the characters:—"Every picture company that closes down for good makes its first and only contribution to the temple of art."

F. H.

LES CAHIERS JAUNES. CINEMA 33. (Paris: José Corti, 6 Rue de Clichy. 10 fr.) This, the fourth number of a series of publications concerned with modern art forms, is devoted entirely to the cinema. Its articles include an analytical review of the film till now by Benjamin Fondane and a glimpse into the future of cinema by Georges Neveux, while among the well-chosen illustrations are stills from films by Clair, Luis Bunuel, Man Ray and Jean Painlevé.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

PABST'S *Don Quixote*, despite its shortcomings, dominates the quarter's cinema. It may not be the epic we expected; but of all the films shown during the past three months, it has the greatest possibility of being shown again after three years. In contrast to the average commercial film, it was made by a cinema individualist with strong personal artistic convictions. The film is discussed in detail elsewhere, and I am content here to suggest that it has a unique value among the tinsel romances and the trivial tales of movie.

Among the other events of the quarter was the gala demonstration of British films given to the World Economic Conference. To represent British cinema achievement, there were shown, among other films, *Windsor*, one of the Gainsborough Miniatures; *Contact*, Paul Rotha's Imperial Airways film, some of whose photography has a Tissé-like brilliance; and *Falling for You*, the Hulbert-Courtneidge comedy. The delegates would certainly be entertained; but I doubt whether they would take away an impression of a strong national cinema, an influence in contemporary life as well as a popular entertainment. Despite *The Prince of Wales*, *The Lucky Number* and *Britannia of Billingsgate*, it is still true that British films are not sufficiently British—cf. *Waltz Time*, *Sleeping Car*, *I Was a Spy*. As an interesting exception, there is the Sound City production, *Doss House*, an impression of a night in a Bloomsbury lodging house, which deserves intelligent support.

America's movie, as always, has revealed a more obvious recognition of the urgency of the times and the need for rousing films, and the case of *Gabriel Over the White House* is discussed below. There has, in addition, been an ugly outbreak of unnatural animal films, and not all of those have the minor compensation of technical refinement that distinguishes *Zoo in Budapest*. *King Kong*, when the ingenuity of its trick photography has been appreciated, may be dismissed in Edgar Wallace's own forecast of its appeal: "It ought to be the best boys' story of the year." In a quarter's cinema of uneven merit, one of the most tantalising films has been Lewis Milestone's *Hallelujah, I'm a Tramp*, a

musical fantasy of Central Park, which has little that recalls the achievement of *All Quiet*.

Few films have come from other countries. We are not likely to see many German films for some time. *Morgenrot*, Germany's version of the submarine drama, was not warmly received in London. France, however, has sent *Le Rosier de Madame Husson* and *The Merry Monarch*, the latter with Emil Jannings, in an adaptation of Pierre Louys' fantasy of a king with a wife for every day in the year. From India came *Karma*, a talkie by Himansu Rai, who made *Shiraz*.

Notable among the quarter's shorts is *Assissi* (Radio), an Italian film by the Cines Company, describing the birthplace of St Francis.

FORSYTH HARDY.

DON QUIXOTE

Production: Nelson and Vandas Films. Direction: G. W. Pabst. Scenario: Paul Morand. Photography: Nicolas Farkas. With Feodor Chaliapine and George Robey. Length: 7,072. Distribution: United Artists.

It was a fine enterprise to film the old masterpiece, and a great achievement to have captured the spirit of the original so successfully. Don Quixote might so easily have been turned into a figure of fun. If he is here the embodiment of wistful pathos, the credit is due first to the production as a whole and secondly to Chaliapine, whose casting as the immortal Don was a stroke of genius. With his lanky frame, his thin face and his wisp of a beard, he gives a convincing impression of the idealist who is out of touch with the realities of the world. It is true he does not act with his voice, which remains operatic; and in his songs, which are dragged in no doubt to please the box-office and not for any necessities of the story, he ceases to be Quixote and relapses into Chaliapine, the operatic singer. And, unfortunately, his English is so bad as to be scarcely intelligible—a fault of which Oscar Asche, in a minor part, is equally guilty, but without the same excuse.

Nevertheless, Chaliapine bestrides the film like a Colossus, and beside him the rest of the company look like insignificant dwarfs. They do not even know how to wear their clothes. Cockney accents contrast grotesquely with period costumes, and the players look like amateurs in comic opera, or masqueraders in fancy dress. The screen has still something to learn from the stage as to stylised speech and movement. In the case of Robey, such incongruities do not matter, since he provides the comic relief; and much may be forgiven him for a clear-cut enunciation that does not strain the ears of the spectator. Allowing for the fact that he cannot forget he is George Robey, and so owes it to his admirers to cloud the limpid simplicity of Sancho Panza with his own brand of archness and sophistication, he makes a sufficiently good foil to his master.

The film opens well with silhouettes of men on horseback, by Lotte Reiniger, stepping out of the pages of Cervantes' book; it reproduces such classic incidents as the affair of the windmills and the release of the prisoners; and ends quaintly with the dead Quixote's voice singing while the book is seen to burn. But the whole film

is kept in the plane of the matter of fact. Quixote's distorted imagination never takes shape before our eyes; and we have no evidence beyond his words that, for example, the windmills were giants. What a rare opportunity for phantasy has been lost!

Disappointing as the film is, it is worth seeing for Chaliapine's impersonation and for its artistic merit. The décor (André Andrejew) is admirable, and the photography is magnificent. Some of the outdoor shots are lovely especially the windmills and the picture of Quixote and Sancho on their steeds against the background of the bare sierras; and the interiors, for composition and light and shade, are better than anything that has been seen for a long time.

MARK SEGAL.

FRENCH VERSION OF DON QUIXOTE

The French version of *Don Quixote*, which I saw in Paris a month or two before the English version reached London, has Dorville as Sancho Panza. He is well qualified physically to be Chaliapine's foil, and he must have found it easier than did Robey to adapt his individual style of humour to that required by the part. One regrets that both he and Robey thought it necessary to point their patter with occasional slang words which definitely do not belong to the age of knight errantry. The effect is incongruous, and inexcusable in a film mounted with such regard for historical accuracy in detail.*

It is doubtful whether Pabst was the right man to handle the Quixote theme. His strength does not lie in the creation of fairy tale atmospheres, and his latest film suffers from his inability to lift it above a dry matter-of-factness quite foreign to what has now lost its satirical content and become the stuff of legend. Pabst's method is too cerebral. He refuses to see the world through Quixote's eye. He presents the mad knight as a lunatic, a tragic figure, indeed, but not one with whom the normal being has kinship. That is utterly wrong, for what has given the Cervantes satire its popularity and long life is just this expression in symbolic form of aspirations common to all of us. I believe Pabst's compatriot, Fritz Lang, would have done the job much better.

The film as it stands is altogether too prosaic. Its exteriors are lovely in their sunwashed definiteness of outline, but the landscape is always the sort of thing one sees from an autocar in the South of France—never the landscape of fairy tale. A few abstract backgrounds might have helped matters. And Don Quixote's eye ought certainly to be identified now and then with the spectator's. It would have been easy, for example, to show us Sancho Panza's impression of the sheep and the windmills, and then cut or dissolve to Don Quixote's. But no; the sheep are just plain sheep, the windmills bear no relation whatever to giants.

A tantalising piece of cinema, for it fails in its interpretation of the Cervantes story, and yet it is perfect beyond the artist's dream as a series of beautifully composed and beautifully lit camera studies. One almost forgives the abuse of close-up for the sheer virtuosity of the portraiture. *Don Quixote* must rank as the most interesting failure of the year.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

* See Interview on page 209, in which Pabst himself answers this charge.—Review Ed.

THE STORY OF A SIMPLE CASE

Production: Soyuzkino. Direction: V. I. Pudovkin. Photography: G. Kabalov. Distribution: Kniga (England) Ltd.

This film was intended for sound, but, owing to the lack of the necessary apparatus, it had to be finished as a silent. Now if this had been an American or a West-European film, the spectator would never have been aware that there had been a serious hitch in production if printed titles and a few appropriate noises rendered by an orchestra had been added. But to deprive Pudovkin's film of its "unnatural" sound counterpoint was to rob it of an integral element which nothing could replace. *A Simple Case*, in fact, is a mere torso. It is true that Pudovkin, in an attempt to remedy its deficiencies, added a prologue and an epilogue; but the effect of these interpolations is still further to unbalance the film.

To judge the film according to its intention is impossible; and it is equally out of the question to criticise it as a finished product. One can only take it as it is; which is to agree with Pudovkin that it is unsatisfactory. It is badly proportioned, incoherent and at times incomprehensible. The story does not matter much; but technically the film cannot be ignored. With all its faults, it is authentic Pudovkin—that is to say, the most brilliant technique in the world. Some of the episodes, regarded in themselves as pure cinema or visual abstract music, detached from their meaning as part of the film, are as good as anything Pudovkin has ever done. Such are the slow-moving prologue, an expression of lyrical beauty; the impressionism of the battle scenes; and a curious but masterly section entitled *Death and Regeneration*.

These last two sequences introduce for the first time what Pudovkin calls the "close up in time"; and, if for no other reason, *A Simple Case* is an historic landmark in cinematography. The theory of the close up in time was fully explained by Pudovkin himself in *The Observer*, January 31, 1932. Briefly, it uses slow motion to emphasise details, and thus corresponds in time to the ordinary spatial close up. As demonstrated by Pudovkin, the new technique is a very potent instrument for sharpening the vividness of visual impressions. For example, in the shots of a shell explosion, fragments of earth are seen flying very swiftly; then, for the briefest fraction of a second, they seem to be poised—the separate fragments stand out sharply—in a high vertical arc, about to rush upon the spectator and to overwhelm him; then the tempo changes equally abruptly and once more the fragments are flying rapidly.

For its technique *A Simple Case* should be seen. M. S.

GABRIEL OVER THE WHITE HOUSE

Production: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction: Gregory La Cava. Photography: Bert Glennon. Art Direction: Cedric Gibbons. With Walter Huston. Length: 8,489. Distribution: M-G-M.

This is singled out for review from America's forty films of the quarter for several sufficiently sound reasons. It marks a deliberate break-away from the comparative trivialities of individual romance and a concentration of attention, however naïvely and unrealistically, on the social and political problems of the day. Those who have found its content simple and sometimes stupid forget that simplicity of appeal is an essential of popular entertainment; that it would be impossible to make generally acceptable on the screen an intellec-

tual debate on the intimacies of world economic reconstruction; and that the alternative to *Gabriel Over the White House*, of interest to all but unthinking people, is *Goldie's Glad Rags* or *Soiled Souls*. Hollywood is often justifiably knocked for the piffling products that come from its studios; but here surely is an occasion for admiration of aim if not to the same extent of achievement.

Gabriel Over the White House is adapted from the novel of an Englishman—"Rinehard," by T. F. Tweed. When the film opens, an American President has been newly elected and, by self-confession, has little intention of attempting to implement the promises that secured his election. He is callous, corrupt, indifferent to the condition of his country and he brings his mistress to live with him at the White House. He is involved in a motor-car accident, suffers concussion of the brain and emerges a changed man—decisive, intelligent, courageous and with a new strength of purpose indicated as having divine origin. A few weeks of insane lucidity suffice for him to solve the problems of the world. Never was solution more simple, swift and satisfactory. The President's Cabinet is troublesome: it is dismissed. Congress is critical: it is adjourned. The unemployed are marching on Washington: he forms them into a prosperity army. Gangsters are rebellious: they are shot down. And so he proceeds up the scale of reform until, the final miracle, he achieves the peace of the world by forming the naval and air forces of Britain and America into an international police force.

From this account of the story, it will be seen that *Gabriel* deals in the most superficial manner with the problems it approaches. The President is a figure of fairy-tale: he has only to wish and his desire is granted. He cannot see anything other than what his imagination has created. He is an innocent child, living in a world of make-believe. The real danger of *Gabriel*, however, is not so much in its fairy-tale quality; but as Grierson has pointed out, in the underlying suggestion "that a benevolent dictatorship can curb the rapacity of our shark society, and that peace can be commanded by a jingo display of war."

Gregory La Cava's direction is expertly economical and vigorously persuasive; and the acting generally is excellent.

F. H.

THE LUCKY NUMBER

Production: Gainsborough. Direction: Anthony Asquith. Photography: Gunther Krampf. Art Direction: A. Vetchinsky. With Gordon Harker, Clifford Mollison. Length: 6,535. Distribution: Gaumont-Ideal.

Once again Asquith has been badly served by the story-gods. This lost lottery ticket business is extremely Millionesque, and there are certainly points in the film where he seems to be qualifying as the English René Clair, a doubtful compliment. There are other points where Lubitsch turns up rather obviously. However, the main thing about the film is that it is mostly Asquith, and Asquith at last fully fledged. There is a firmness of touch about the main sequences of *The Lucky Number* which his previous productions lacked.

I recommend for especial attention the pub. scenes. They are witty, authentic, and beautifully directed and cut. Gordon Harker has never been in better hands (I had almost said on a better bench) and there is a superb Yorkshireman whom Asquith, in incredibly few feet, gets blindly, disgustingly, obscenely, but above all gorgeously drunk. This



From "The Virtuous Isidore," a version of the de Maupassant story, "Le Rosier de Madame Husson."
Direction by Bernard Deschamps.





Two examples of
Will Dyson's work
from "Modern
Caricatures."

(See page 234).

Hollywood Collaborators. "But surely,
Mr Shakespeare, you will admit that two
heads is better than one! . . ."



The Higher Literati
and the Film. "But
understand, Miss
Hollywood, only with
reluctance . . . with
marked reluctance!"

is the best sequence in the film. Note, too, the use of musical comment. In addition to some very competent use of natural sound, Asquith has succeeded in insinuating some extremely witty musical remarks which emerge—again beautifully timed—at unexpected, but wholly appropriate, moments. The entire cast is excellent. And finally, the film is box-office, and that, to anyone who has followed Asquith's previous career with qualified but continuous admiration, must mean a lot.

But even more finally let me reiterate my criticism of *Rome Express*. Until Asquith is given a free hand with his story, we shall not see a truly Asquithian film. When he does get his own way, I venture to think he will make a film really about England—in the sense that Walter Forde's *Rome Express* and indeed this very *Lucky Number* are not. In any case, you may count on Asquith. He means something.

BASIL WRIGHT.

THE VIRTUOUS ISIDORE (Le Rosier de Madame Husson)

Production: *Les Films Ormuzd*. Direction: *Bernard Deschamps*.
Photography: *Nicolas Farkas*. Music: *Michel Levine*. Art
Direction: *P. Schild*. Length: 6,030. Distribution: *National Distributors*.

If ever a compulsory course of study is instituted for directors and scenarists, this film should be included in the curriculum as an exemplar of adaptation. With loving solicitude, de Maupassant's short story has been pruned, trimmed, amplified and rounded out to fit the requirements of the screen; with the result that the film is the perfect expression of the intention of the story, and like Fitzgerald's Omar can stand irrespective of origin in its own right.

It is as well that blasphemous hands in other countries should not be laid on such typical products of national wit as this story; for only the Gallic intelligence could so refashion it. Fortunately, considerations of censorship—for once a blessing—will make English and American executives fight shy of such a theme as this: the selection of a young man to wear the crown of virtue which every girl has forfeited, and his consequent downfall.

From the beginning, when the scene of the comedy is disclosed, to the end, when the fallen Isidore embraces his horror-stricken patroness, there is not a false or weak touch. The action is exactly in the right key; and its main sweep is reinforced by a succession of felicitous details. If the inimitable acting of Fernandel as Isidore is singled out, it is only because he sustains the heaviest burden in a film in which every actor, however important or unimportant, is a star shining according to the magnitude of his part.

I found the film irresistibly funny, but it will not amuse the prudish; and—a policy of discretion—there are no English titles. But much of the film is taken without speech, and even where there is dialogue the broad purport is unmistakable. And, for a delight to the eye, the film presents an amazing collection of faces: a veritable portrait gallery.

M. S. (Cinema)

Film Societies and other organisations wishing to get in touch with the distributors of any films mentioned in these pages may, in cases of uncertainty, address their letters, c/o *Cinema Quarterly*.—REVIEW EDITOR.

THE FILM SOCIETIES

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY. Hon. Secretaries: F. Heming Vaughan and C. M. Attlee, 27 Parkfield Road, Liverpool, 17.

This new Society has been founded as a local organisation to co-operate with the British Film Institute. Immediate activities consist in the issuing of a Bulletin, the main purpose of which is to advise members what films are worth seeing. An attractive series of monthly meetings is being arranged for the winter season. These will include film shows, lectures, an exhibition of stills and a demonstration of the possibilities of the film in education. The Society also has in view the production of a 16mm. film of Liverpool and hopes to organise an ambitious open competition for amateurs, details of which will be announced later. Possible future developments include the arranging of children's matinees, similar to those given by the Edinburgh Film Guild, and the creation of a private exhibiting society and film club. The annual subscription, meanwhile, is half-a-crown.

SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL SIGHT AND SOUND ASSOCIATION. Hon. Secretary: A. A. Mackay, Ednam Schoolhouse, Kelso.

A group of teachers in the East of Scotland and the Borders have formed this association to further the use in schools of such visual and auditory aids to learning as the film, the film-slide, radio and the gramophone. At present the society has area committees in Edinburgh, the Borders and Fife, and demonstrations of a propagandist nature have been held in those districts. Membership is open.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., R. H. Muxlow, 16 Northampton Road, Croydon.

This new society was inaugurated on April 30 at a largely attended meeting which was addressed by Ernest Betts and J. S. Fairfax Jones. Activities will commence in the autumn and the subscription will be one guinea. Performances will be held on Sunday afternoons once a month in the Picture House, North End.

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., Miss D. E. Baerlein, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich.

Commencing in September this new society will give eight monthly Sunday performances in the Plaza Cinema, Northwich. There are two subscriptions, 25s. and 10s., and guest tickets may be purchased at 4s. and 2s.

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY. Largely as a result of the interest aroused by the exhibition of film stills recently arranged by the Oxford Arts Club, it is hoped to form a film society for the city of Oxford, as distinct from the University. Mrs Hilda Harrisson, Sandlands, Boar's Hill, Oxford, is making the preliminary arrangements, and she will be glad to hear from any one who is interested.

RECENT PROGRAMMES

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1.

April 2. *Kino Parade*. (Film Society). *The Voice of the World*. (New Era). *Disney's Barnyard Battle*. (Ideal). *Tour de Chant*. (Film Society). *Le Sang d'un Poète*. (Film Society).

May 21. *The Zuiderzee Dyke*. (Film Society). *It's Fun to be Fooled*. (British Schufftan). *Experiments in Hand Drawn Sound*. (Film Society). *The Cultivation of Living Tissue*. (Empire Cancer Campaign). *A Simple Case*. (Kniga).

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road.

March 12. *The Eyes of Science*. (Film Society). *Silly Symphony*. *Busy Beavers*. (Ideal). *The New Generation*. (New Era). *The Diary of a Revolutionist*. (Arcos).

April 9. *Invisible Clouds*. (Gaumont). *Pacific 231*. (Film Society). *Silly Symphony*. *The Spider and the Fly*. (Ideal). *War is Hell*. (W. P. Films).

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 South Saint Andrew Street.

April 23. *Prague*. (Film Society). *A Bronx Morning*. (Film Society). *The Bridge*. (Film Society). *The New Generation*. (New Era). *Jen's Colour Abstract*. (Film Society). *Philips' Radio*. (Film Society). *Berlin*. (Wardour).

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College.

March 18. *Prague*. (Film Society). *Invasion of Shanghai*. (Film Society). *Pacific 231*. (Film Society). *Un Soir de Rafle*. (Audax).

May 11. *Extasy*. (Film Society).

ETON COLLEGE FILM SOCIETY. February 11. *The Flying Coffer*. (Film Society.) *The Bridge*. (Film Society). Early Cartoon. *Potemkin*. (Arcos).

March 18. *Crisis*. (New Party). Early Serial. *Only a Working Man*. (Chaplin). *Cinderella*. (Wardour).

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY.

April 30. *Jen's Colour Abstract*. (Film Society). *Disney's Whoopee Party*. (Ideal). *Prague*. (Film Society). *Storm Over Asia*. (Arcos).

May 14. *Mickey's Nightmare*. (Ideal). *Screen Souvenir*. (Paramount). *Silly Symphony*. *Flowers and Trees*. (Ideal). *Extasy*. (Film Society).

May 28. *Pacific 231*. (Film Society). Chaplin's *The Cure*. (Radio). *The Road to Life*. (Arcos).

June 11. *Trader Mickey*. (Ideal). *Ten Minutes with Mozart*. (Film Society). *Silly Symphony*. *Monkey Melodies*. (Ideal). *Der Hauptman von Koepenick*. (British Lion).

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